

independent. They don't want to have any strings attached. They don't want to be beholden to anybody, and they will refuse government funding.

While there are certainly projects that the NEA does that are worthwhile, some are objectionable and have been over recent history. And at a time when fiscal restraint is crucial, we must examine closely how and where we are spending taxpayer money. It is not only appropriate but necessary to question some of the funding in this bill and see if it can be either reduced or directed to more worthwhile programs.

My amendment would save taxpayers an immediate \$150 million in budget authority spending in fiscal year 2008, and allows the remaining \$10 million to be spent on shutdown costs. This still reduces the overall cost of this spending bill and sends a message that in this budget environment we are willing to tighten our belts here in Washington just as any American family or business would have to.

It is disheartening to think there is an assumption of continued taxpayer support for every single discretionary program. Yet that is exactly what we are hearing today in this debate on funding for the NEA. There are arguments for why we must continue to spend money on an art program when we face budget constraints in trying to adequately provide necessary treatment for our returning veterans and all of the many priorities in our almost \$3 trillion budget.

I come from a commonsense perspective that says when my bank account is low, I make tough decisions on where my money must be spent. None of my colleagues supporting this funding seem to fully appreciate this approach, and it is disappointing and it is in large part why we face the budget situation that we are in.

I would note that the budget for this appropriations bill is I believe \$1.9 billion over what the President has requested. I hear talk about how our deficit is going up every week, every day, every month. This is a great opportunity that we have to stop the hemorrhaging. We can stop the spending. I am disappointed that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are contemplating not extending the Bush temporary tax cuts. They want to end that in their budget plan. That would amount to the largest tax increase in American history. We have this opportunity now to take \$160 million and save it for the taxpayer. So I just think this would be a well-considered thing.

The arts are valuable in American life and culture. For anyone to say let's do this through the private sector as opposed to the taxpayers does not make them a member of the Flat Earth Society. The arts are valuable, but they are well supported in our society and culture. We just have so many other priorities.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO).

Mr. DEFAZIO. We have heard speaker after speaker on the Republican side say how concerned they are about spending. The minority whip stood in the well and castigated the Democrats for spending. He has \$950,000 of earmarks in the bill.

The woman from Colorado has \$150,000 of earmarks in the bill.

If the gentleman is so sincere, let's entertain a unanimous-consent request.

Mr. Chairman, is it in order to make a unanimous-consent request?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It depends on the nature of the request.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the Republicans be allowed to voluntarily strip their \$45 million of earmarks from this bill, which would save one-quarter of the amount of money that the gentleman is trying to save by cutting all the funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The order of the House allowing only certain amendments may not be varied by the Committee of the Whole.

Mr. DEFAZIO. In conclusion then, we have a bit of hypocrisy here. They want to complain at the same time as they put the projects in their pocket and they go home and brag about it. They brag about how they want to cut spending in Washington, and they brag about the money they bring home.

I believe in investment in America in many ways, and this bill is making many crucial investments in America.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

It is important for Members to realize as they consider the committee action that the \$160 million recommended only partially restores cuts made to this agency a decade ago. In fact, the amount in this bill is still \$16 million below the level provided in 1993. After adjusting for inflation, the amount recommended is \$100 million below the level in 1993, as displayed on a chart that I showed Members earlier.

As we debate this amendment, Members should also note that the National Endowment for the Arts has been transformed since the arts funding debate of the 1990s. Two gifted chairmen have reinvigorated the NEA into an agency with broad support. Chairman Bill Ivey, appointed by Bill Clinton, negotiated and implemented bipartisan reforms in NEA's grant structure to ensure that funds go to activities for which public funding is appropriate.

Dana Gioia, the current chairman, then energized the agency with many new programs and a commitment to reach beyond the cultural centers of our major cities.

Last year, every single congressional district received NEA support through innovative programs such as the American Masterpieces, Operation Homecoming and the Big Read.

Today, NEA is a truly national program with outreach efforts to every corner of America and every segment of her society. Each of us have different reasons to support the arts. Some will describe their support in terms of the inherent joy of the arts as a personally enriching experience. Others support the arts as engines of job development and economic growth.

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It is equally important to emphasize that most Members of the House in recent years have been supporting funding for the arts and for the humanities. I believe the cultural wars should be over. For each of the last 7 years with the help of many Members in this Chamber, a bipartisan majority in the House has voted to increase funding for the NEA. During the last 2 years, Ms. SLAUGHTER's and my amendments to add funds were adopted by voice vote, without opposition from Mr. TAYLOR.

Mr. Chairman, I do not normally include quotes in my floor remarks, but I was struck in preparing for this year's art debate by a quote attributed to actor Richard Dreyfus at the Grammy awards ceremony:

"Perhaps we've all misunderstood the reason we learn music and all the arts in the first place. It is that for hundreds of years, it has been known that teaching the arts helps to create the well-rounded mind that western civilization, and America, have been grounded on. America's greatest achievements in science, in business, in popular culture, would simply not be attainable without an education that encourages achievement in all fields. It is from that creativity and imagination that the solutions to our political and social problems will come. We need that well-rounded mind now. Without it, we simply make more difficult the problems we face."

I believe Mr. Dreyfus is right, and the committee has acted to provide the funding so arts can reach even more broadly into American communities with a richer variety of programs.

I urge defeat of the gentleman's amendment and support for the committee position.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Colorado is recognized for his remaining 30 seconds.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My wife, Jeanie, is an artist. I support, she supports, the arts. I agree with what you said about the importance of arts in our culture. The only question is who should pay for it. Should the taxpayer pay for it or the private sector? The \$160 million budget in this bill is \$35 million, or 29 percent, higher than last year's budget. Do we need a 29 percent tax increase? I think the arts are great, but let's support it in the private sector.

I would urge adoption of this amendment, Mr. Chairman.